WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   In a communication system that transmits text messages to mobile terminals, a mobile terminal comprising:

a receiver that receives voice and text messages over an RF channel;

a text-to-speech (TTS) converter that employs a low complexity phonetic TTS algorithm;

a speech decoder; and

a switch that operates to selectively provide decoded data to the TTS converter or the speech decoder, wherein decoded data comprising a text message is provided to the TTS converter and decoded data comprising voice data is provided to the speech decoder.

2.   The mobile terminal of claim 1, further comprising:

a voice recognition module; and

a command interpreter module.

3.   The mobile terminal of claim 2, further comprising:

a controller that produces text menu messages.

4.   The mobile terminal of claim 1, wherein the text messages are text messages transmitted under the Global Standard for Mobile communication (GSM) Short Message Service (SMS) protocol.

5.   A method for providing audible output of text messages in a communication system that transmits voice and text messages to mobile terminals, the method comprising:

receiving voice and text messages over an RF channel;

decoding a received message;

selectively providing the decoded data to a text-to-speech (TTS) converter or a speech decoder based on the decoded data, wherein decoded data comprising a text message is provided to the TTS converter and decoded data comprising voice data is provided to the speech decoder; and

outputting the received message in audible form, wherein the TTS converter employs a low complexity phonetic TTS algorithm.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

producing, by a controller within the mobile terminal, text menu messages;

generating, within the mobile terminal, audible messages corresponding to the text menu messages; and

outputting the audible text menu messages to the user.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the audible menu messages are generated using the TTS converter.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the audible menu messages are generated using a voice synthesizer connected to the speech decoder.

9. The method of claim 5, further comprising:

receiving a spoken command;

processing the received command within a voice recognition module to produce a recognized word;

matching the recognized word to an associated mobile terminal command;

issuing an action corresponding to the mobile terminal command to a command execution block within the mobile terminal; and

providing an audible acknowledgment to user upon completion of the command.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein the audible acknowledgment is generated using the TTS converter.

11.   The method of claim 9, wherein the audible acknowledgment is generated using a voice synthesizer connected to the speech decoder